

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0402**

August 9, 2013

Tena O'Brien  
County and Probate Clerk  
Benton County  
215 E Central Ave Rm 217  
Bentonville, AR 72712-5373

Dear Ms. O'Brien:

Thank you for contacting me to express your concerns regarding the White River designation as a National Blueway System (NBS). It is very important for me to know your views, and I appreciate you taking the time to share them.

I initially welcomed the promises of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) that the NBS designation of the White River would not affect state or local management of waterways, and that it does not authorize or affect the use of private property. Further, I welcomed DOI's commitment to coordinating with state and local stakeholders along the White River. However, it has become clear to me that DOI did not sufficiently involve Arkansas or Missouri stakeholders, including private land owners along the White River in the development and implementation of this program. It is also clear that the NBS lacks the transparency expected and required of a federal program, including requirement for public notice and comment of the programs goals and intentions. I contacted the DOI on March 13, 2013, to express my concerns regarding the NBS and urged the Department to work with local communities and businesses to ensure that the Blueway designation of the White River does not interfere with local activities and river use. Further, I requested that DOI provide my office with any potential regulations that could result from this designation.

On May 31, 2013, I received a response from DOI. In their response, DOI states that the Order to establish the NBS does not contain any provision to interfere with state and local management of waterways and does not interfere with any applicable law including water rights. However, I was not satisfied with their response and joined my colleagues in the Arkansas and Missouri Congressional Delegations in another letter provided to DOI on June 26, 2013, requesting additional information on the NBS, including information on the authority of states to opt out of the federal designation.

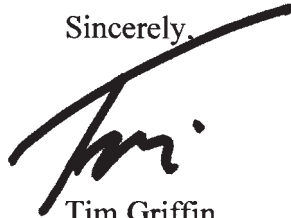
On July 3, 2013, the Secretary of the DOI Sally Jewell rescinded the National Blueway designation for the White River and its watershed after state and local leaders requested its removal. I applaud Secretary Jewell for listening to Arkansans' concerns about the NBS; however, the questions my colleagues and I have raised about the program remain, and I look forward to receiving answers so that we may fully understand the NBS's impact on communities around the country.

Further, in a House Natural Resources Committee hearing on July 17, 2013, Secretary Jewell announced that DOI has suspended the NBS and would not be designating any new waterways under the program at this time.

I also know that this is not the end of proposed federal regulation of state and local waterways by this Administration, and rest assured, I am committed to ensuring that our state maintains essential control of our natural resources without unnecessary federal intervention. I know that some concerns have been expressed regarding a Memorandum of Understanding from a number of federal agencies that names the White River/Cache River and its watershed as a "watershed demonstration pilot." My staff contacted DOI to inquire about this program and DOI informed my staff that since the Blueway designation was rescinded, the DOI no longer considers the watershed a demonstration project. I understand that concerns remain about federal programs affecting state and local authority, and please feel free to contact me regarding any specific issues with the White River.

Again, thank you for contacting me. It is an honor to represent Arkansas's Second Congressional District, and your input allows me to do my best in representing the District. Please do not hesitate to contact me at my Little Rock office at (501) 324-5941, and my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-2506. You can visit me online and choose to receive my e-newsletters at [Griffin.House.gov](http://Griffin.House.gov). I'm also online at [Facebook.com/RepTimGriffin](https://Facebook.com/RepTimGriffin), [Twitter.com/RepTimGriffin](https://Twitter.com/RepTimGriffin), and [YouTube.com/RepTimGriffin](https://YouTube.com/RepTimGriffin).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tim', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the top of the signature.

Tim Griffin  
Member of Congress